

Message Text

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ACTION CU-04

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4287

INFO USIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC, UR

SUBJECT: EXCHANGES: CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS: OPRYLAND

USIA FOR IEE, STATE FOR CU/CP

REF: STATE 219207 AND MOSCOW 13852

1. OPRYLAND TAPE JUST RECEIVED AND HAS BEEN STUDIED CAREFULLY BY EMBASSY. AFTER CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT AND CONSULTATION, EMBASSY STRONGLY OPPOSES OPRYLAND TOUR AND URGES NEGOTIATIONS WITH OPRYLAND BE ENDED. INSTEAD EMBASSY URGENTLY REQUESTS DEPT MAKE EFFORT FIND FOR SAME TIME PERIOD AUTHENTIC, PROFESSIONAL BLUE GRASS OR COUNTRY MUSIC GROUP OF SMALLER, MORE TRANSPORTABLE SIZE.

2. EMBASSY BELIEVES DOCUMENTARY, FRAGMENTED SONG ASPECT OF OPRYLAND SHOW WOULD BE MONTONOUS AND BASICALLY INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO SOVIET AUDIENCES. BRIDGES, EXPLANATIONS AND ALLUSIONS ARE TOTALLY MEANINGLESS HERE. MANY SONGS ALSO DEPEND ON UNDERSTANDING OF ENGLISH FOR THEIR IMPACT. OVERALL QUALITY OF SONGS AS PRESENTED IS SO POOR THEY WOULD NOT STAND ON OWN PURELY AS MUSIC TO NON-ENGLISH-SPEAKING AUDIENCES. PRESENTATION DEPENDS HEAVILY ON NOSTALGIC FEELINGS OF NATIVE AMERICAN AUDIENCES FOR WHOM SNATCHES OF SONGS WOULD CALL UP COMPLEX RANGE OF FEELINGS. WITHOUT THIS, SOVIET AUDIENCES WOULD BE LEFT WITH VERY LITTLE OF MUSICAL VALUE. BELIEVE ANY REVISION WOULD NOT RPT NOT SOLVE BASIC PROBLEMS FOR SOVIET

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TOUR.

3. ADDITIONALLY, UNDESIRABLE HAVE LARGE, LOW-APPEAL PROGRAM LIKE "I HEAR AMERICA SINGING" BACK-TO-BACK WITH ROGER WAGNER CHORALE.

4. EMBASSY VERY INTERESTED IN PRESENTING HIGH QUALITY AMERICAN COUNTRY MUSIC HERE. OPRYLAND SHOW CONTAINS LITTLE COUNTRY MUSIC PER SE AND WHAT IT DOES IS UNAUTHENTIC AND COMMERCIALIZED. EMBASSY FEELS COUNTRY MUSIC WOULD HAVE INSTANT APPEAL ESPECIALLY TO YOUTH AND MINORITIES. EMBASSY DESIRES TO MAKE EFFORT TO TAKE GOOD COUNTRY MUSIC GROUP INTO NON-RUSSIAN REPUBLICS SUCH AS ARMENIA, MOLDAVIA, TADZHIKISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA WHERE STRINGED INSTRUMENTS ARE BASIC TO CULTURE. KNOWLEDGEABLE SOVIETS THEMSELVES HAVE OBSERVED THAT AMERICAN BLUE GRASS IS VERY MUCH AKIN TO MUSIC OF THESE REPUBLICS.

5. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS DEPT EXPLORE TOUR POSSIBILITIES OF THESE OR SIMILAR QUALITY GROUPS:

A. THE COUNTRY GENTLEMEN (BASED IN WASHINGTON, D.C.)

B. EARL SCRUGGS REVUE (HENDERSONVILLE, TENN.; PUBLISHER IN NEW YORK IS PEER-SOUTHERN ORGANIZATION WHO WOULD KNOW HOW TO GET IN TOUCH)

C. JOHNNY CASH PLUS GROUP.

EMBASSY REALIZES THESE GROUPS ARE SMALL BUT THEY COULD BE AUGMENTED SOMEWHAT FOR SOVIET TOUR. COMPACT GROUPS THAT ARE TOURABLE APPEAL BOTH TO EMBASSY AND GOLOVIN, AND WOULD BE EASIER TO TRANSPORT AMID DIFFICULTIES OF SOVIET WINTER. ALSO, SMALLER GROUP, WITHOUT ELABORATE PROPS AND BAGGAGE, WOULD MAKE POSSIBLE FLIGHTS TO MORE DISTANT AREAS.

6. FOR FURTHER ADVICE, SUGGEST DEPT CONTACT RALPH RINZLER, CURATOR, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WHO IS AUTHORITY IN FIELD. DUBS

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